

What You Need to Know About Deep Vein Thrombosis

What is a Deep Vein Thrombosis?

A deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that forms in the veins in the body (usually in the leg or pelvis).

What causes a Deep Vein Thrombosis?

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) sometimes occurs for no apparent reason. However, certain factors can increase the chance of developing a DVT:

- Inactivity
- Hospital stays and surgery
- Damage to your blood vessel from an injury or trauma
- Medical and genetic conditions
- Pregnancy
- Taking estrogen-based medicine such as hormonal birth control or hormone replacement therapy
- Overweight or obese
- Family history of DVT
- Older age

What are the symptoms of DVT?

Only about half of the people who have a DVT have signs and symptoms. These signs and symptoms of a deep vein clot include:

- Pain or tenderness, often starting in the calf.
- Swelling, including the ankle & foot.
- Warmth and redness of the area or a noticeable discoloration

How is a DVT diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask you questions about your symptoms and if your symptoms suggest that a blood clot is likely, you could have one or all of the following tests:

- **Blood test for a D-dimer:** this test measures the level of a compound released when blood clots are dissolving. A high level may mean you have Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT).
- **Imaging studies:**
 - **Ultrasound** – This is the most common test for diagnosing deep vein blood clots. This test uses sound waves to create pictures of blood flowing through the arteries and veins in the affected leg.
 - **Venography** - if an ultrasound doesn't provide a clear diagnosis your doctor may order a venography. For this test, dye is injected into a vein in the affected leg. The dye makes the vein visible on an x-ray image. The x-ray will show whether blood flow is slow in the vein, which may suggest a blood clot.
- Other tests used to diagnose DVT include **MRI** (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) or **CT** (Computed Tomography Scanning). These tests create pictures of your organs and tissue.

Your doctor may order other imaging and blood tests as needed.

How is a DVT treated?

The treatment of DVT may include:

- **Blood thinning medications-** prevent blood clots from forming or getting larger. Some examples are: (Heparin, LOVENOX®, FRAGMIN® (dalteparin sodium injection), INNOHEP® (tinzaparin sodium injection), Coumadin® (warfarin), Eliquis® (apixaban), Pradaxa® (dabigatran), Xarelto® (rivaroxaban), Savaysa® (edoxaban).

- **Thrombolytic Therapy**- dissolves blood clots using medication called “Clot Busters.”
- **Thrombectomy**- a procedure used to remove a clot.
- **IVC (Vein Filters)**- a medical device used to prevent clots from traveling through the body.
- **Stents**- a medical device used to treat narrow or weak arteries.

How can I prevent a DVT in the future?

- Stay active and try not to sit for long periods of time. For example, take your time while traveling so that you are not sitting for too long.
- Maintain an ideal body weight
- Review your risk factors and your medical history with your doctor.
- Talk to your doctor about preventing blood clots after surgery.

Where can I learn more about DVT blood clots?

- Clot Connect Project: <http://www.clotconnect.org/>
- Venous Thromboembolism (Blood Clots):
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dvt/index.html>
- Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) Fact Sheet:
<http://vascular-disease.org/flyers/deep-vein-thrombosis-flyer.pdf>

Audiovisual Resources:

- Vascular Disease Foundation. **How Blood Clots Form:**
<http://www.vdf.org/interactive/videos.html>

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